

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1 through 10 are cancelled.

11. (Currently Amended) A method for the protection of a plant from pathogenic fungi, the method comprising,

providing a viable binucleate Rhizoctonia strain in an amount effective to protect a plant from pathogenic fungi, characterized as having an ITS1 sequence which is at least 90% homologous with SEQ ID NO:20 and which confers protection against pathogenic fungi to the plant; and

allowing the binucleate Rhizoctonia strain to grow with the plant.

12. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11 where the plant is selected from the group consisting of tomato, pepper, cucumber, lettuce, radish, bean, potato, sugar beet, carrot, garlic, onions, alfalfa, grass, wheat and rape.

13. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11, where the plant is an herb.

14. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 13, where the plant is parsley.

15. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11, where the plant is a tree.

16. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 15, where the plant is a pine tree.

17. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11, where the plant is a flower.
18. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11, wherein the plant is a field crop, container-grown crop, water bed crop, vegetable crop, fruit crop, ornamental crop, nursery crop, garden crop, forest crop, or greenhouse crop.
19. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11, comprising inoculating plant seeds with the binucleate Rhizoctonia strain.
20. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 19, further comprising allowing the seeds to be colonised by the binucleate Rhizoctonia strain.
21. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 19, further comprising allowing the seeds to be colonised by the binucleate Rhizoctonia strain prior to planting the seeds.
22. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 19, further comprising allowing the seeds to be colonised by the binucleate Rhizoctonia strain prior to exposure of the seeds to pathogenic fungi.
23. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 19, further comprising allowing the seeds to be colonised by the binucleate Rhizoctonia strain prior to germination.
24. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 11, ~~wherein providing includes further~~ comprising selling the binucleate Rhizoctonia strain to a farmer.
25. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 11, ~~wherein providing includes further~~ comprising selling the binucleate Rhizoctonia strain to an entity other than a commercial grower.

26. Canceled

27. Canceled

28. Canceled

29. Canceled

30. Canceled

31. Canceled

32. Canceled

33. Canceled

34. (Currently Amended) A method of protecting a seed, plant, or seedling, the method comprising providing a seed, plant, or seedling inoculated ~~associated~~ with a binucleate Rhizoctonia strain, characterized as having an ITS1 sequence which is at least 90% homologous with SEQ ID NO:20 and which confers protection against pathogenic fungi to the plant.

35. (Currently Amended) A method of protecting a seed, plant, or seedling, the method comprising:

providing a mycelium of a viable binucleate Rhizoctonia strain in an amount effective to protect a seed, plant, or seedling from pathogenic fungi, characterized as having an ITS1 sequence which is at least 90% homologous with SEQ ID NO:20 and which confers protection against pathogenic fungi to the plant;

mixing the mycelium with a diluent; and

Applicant : Victor Rubio Susan et al.
Serial No. : 09/744,502
Filed : January 24, 2001
Page : 5 of 16

Attorney's Docket No.: 15605-
002001 / GKR/DMI/USP79179

contacting the diluted mycelium with the seed, plant, or seedling.